

Report indicates STV has greater recognition than cable in L.A., and almost identical subscriber satisfaction. Fact that cable is cheaper per-channel buy didn't make any difference either -- STV subscribers think they're paying fair price, Bortz said. His major conclusion is that there's sharp drop in ability of each new cable service to add more subscribers. Five channels provide 90% of audience, are really all subscribers watch, by his estimate. Cable operator's task is to have "the right 5 channels," without knowing for sure which they are.

American TV & Communications Chmn. Trygve Myhren agreed cable is facing "significant competition," said answers are reduced municipal responsibilities, such as excess channel capacity and franchise fees. He suggested entertainment tax on all over-air signals to remove STV-MDS "unfair advantages," while acknowledging that some of cable promises made in heat of franchise battles "exceeded economic good sense." ATC, of course, is covering its bets with 3 STV and 3 MDS operations and part ownership of Zenith multi-channel decoder.

Mathias, Cannon Bills Weighed

SENATE HEARS VIEWS ON HEARING-AID-COMPATIBLE PHONES

Despite pleas at Senate hearing Thurs. by groups seeking bill to make all new phones compatible with hearing aids, Senate Communications Subcommittee appeared to be leaning toward milder bill requiring FCC to guarantee "reasonable access" to phones by hearing-impaired.

Spokesmen for AT&T and GTE told Subcommittee at hearing that both companies have taken voluntary steps to provide special phones for use by hearing-impaired, argued that making all telephones that way would be too costly -- with costs probably passed to consumers -- and would impede technology. Dennis Sullivan, AT&T asst. vp, and Daniel Bart, GTE senior attorney, also noted that portable conversion units are available which hearing-impaired people can use to make regular phones hearing-aid compatible.

At issue is S-604 sponsored by Sen. Mathias (R-Md.) which would require all new telephone handsets to be manufactured so they set up electromagnetic field. Certain hearing aids, designed to eliminate feedback or whistle when used with telephone, are dependent on electromagnetic field. Organizations representing hearing-impaired are concerned because such handsets, which used to be standard, are no longer in general use in many areas.

However, leadership on Subcommittee -- which has jurisdiction on issue -- has sponsored milder S-2355 which makes such handsets mandatory only on pay phones. Bill sponsored by Sen. Cannon (D-Nev.) and cosponsored by Sens. Goldwater (R-Ariz.) and Riegle (D-Mich.) also directs FCC to guarantee "reasonable access" elsewhere and permits FCC to mandate such telephones in "hospital rooms and other locations frequently used by members of the public."

Goldwater & Cannon told representatives of hearing-impaired that they sympathize with problem -- both admitted to some hearing problems -- and Goldwater explained that his wife is severely hearing-impaired. However, both questioned whether it's fair to pass on extra costs to all consumers when only some need such service. Goldwater said "remarkable headway" has been made in recent talks between Senate and phone company about further voluntary actions. He said his biggest complaint is that although services are available for disabled people, phone companies haven't properly publicized those services.

FCC official also had doubts about whether there's need to make all telephones hearing aid-compatible, said S-2355 is "preferable." Leon Kestenbaum, Common

Carrier Bureau deputy chief, noted voluntary steps by phone companies such as making most pay phones compatible with special hearing aids. However, he added that both bills could present major problem: Under Computer 2, which deregulates equipment, there's question whether FCC would have jurisdiction over manufacture of headsets.

O.J. Gusella of Electronic Industries Assn. said S-604 is "well-intentioned bill with hidden disadvantages which greatly outweigh the limited benefits it would provide." He said that type of receiver sought by hearing-impaired is being replaced with new design that's "more efficient in producing sound," added that magnetic field was "accidental characteristic" that state & federal regulators for years urged phone companies to eliminate. He also noted that under deregulation, "extra costs that would be added to telephones by [S-604] will not be absorbed by the telephone companies. Instead, they must be paid by all telephone users."

Saying views were his own because he has interest in issue, consultant Charles Jackson said he favors S-2355 because benefits of other bill don't outweigh cost and impact on innovation. Among most articulate testimony on behalf of hearing-impaired came from Edana Lee Schmidt, past pres. of Organization for Use of the Telephone, who said that although she's extremely hard of hearing, she has led active, normal life with help of special telephone-coupled hearing aid but at times has had to drive miles through blinding rain to get to pay phone when compatible phones aren't available.

OBITUARY

Charles Hoffman, 67, consumer electronics leader, was found dead May 5 of heart attack at his home in Arlington, Va. He was chmn. of EIA Consumer Products Div. (now Consumer Electronics Group) in 1967-1970, later was EIA vp representing CEG. He served as regional sales mgr. of Magnavox, dir. of Sears sales for Warwick (now Sanyo Mfg. Co.), mktg. dir. of Cortron, TV maker owned by Marcor. After Admiral's purchase of Cortron, he became contract sales mgr., then consumer affairs dir. of Admiral, joined EIA staff as CEG senior vp in 1977, retiring in 1979. Two sons survive.

COMMUNICATIONS PERSONALS

Robert Bennett, pres. of Boston Bcstrs. Inc., will become senior vp-TV and 4th member of Metromedia Pres. Office when Metromedia closes on \$220 million purchase of BBI's WCVB-TV Boston May 18... NBC News Pres. Reuven Frank named to AP board... Herman Badler advanced at CBS to vp-production facilities, Washington; William Connolly promoted to development vp... Jay Heifetz advanced to dir.-operations projects, American TV & Communications... Robert Klingensmith advanced to senior vp, Paramount Video... Anthony LaGreca, ex-Techtran Industries, joins Magnavox CATV as mfg. mgr.; Ronald Hazelton advanced to documentation mgr., Engineering Dept.; George Erhardt to chief engineer, systems engineering; Rocco Lupo to chief engineer, analog engineering.

Theodore Kramer advanced to chief, FCC Common Carrier Bureau Enforcement Div... Donald Kiser appointed vp-engineering, GTE, and pres., GTE Labs... Timothy Malone advanced to operations mgr., Southeastern Telecom... Rush Evans, ex-KTBC-TV Austin, named gen. mgr., KCOY-TV Santa Maria, Cal... Charles Eissler, ex-Oak Communications, appointed national sales mgr.-cable products, CATV/STV/Videotex Operations, Zenith... Terry Morse, ex-Hill Mandelker, named production vp, Viacom Productions... Charles Britt, ex-Avco Embassy, joins Lorimar TV Distribution as special sales vp... Dee Dee Kramer promoted to human resource development mgr.